



**Dear Friends,**

**I have been thinking of the reading two Sundays ago as I watch the news each night – of that intimate picture of Abraham walking and talking with God and pleading for the lives of complete strangers – perhaps those who were even his enemies!**

I have also received a couple of emails from Baptist World Aid Australia in the last week related to the situation in Gaza.

The first came from Mike Bartlett, Baptist World Aid's Advocacy Policy Manager. He was reflecting on the woman in the book of Lamentations. He writes:

She doesn't even speak until chapter 1 verse 9 but when she does, her first word is worth paying attention to: *"Look, Lord, on my affliction."* She gradually starts to find her voice in verse 11, before turning to others in her grief in verse 12: *"Look, Lord, and consider, for I am despised. All you who pass by? Look around and see. Is any suffering like my suffering?"*. By verse 20 the emotion is pouring: *"See, Lord, how distressed I am! I am in torment..."*

Look. Look. Look. This is the demand I hear as I imagine the lament of those weeping daily through our televisions:

***"Look. Look, and don't look away.***

***Look, because we are human beings too.***

***Look, because our life or death shouldn't be dictated by the geography of our residence any more than yours.***

***Look, because for too long, we have gone unseen.***

***Look and feel a tiny portion of what we feel.***

***Look, so that you might imagine yourself as one of us, with your family, here.***

***Look, be a witness to our humanity and this suffering so that you might become an advocate for peace, because we know that violence only begets violence. Look. Look, and don't look away."***

This is the lament I see and hear and hear on the news every day, and I for one cannot look away. Perhaps if we allow ourselves to be pierced by this demand to look, to identify with the humanity of those suffering, we might be motivated to act, advocate, and give as energetically and generously as we are able, as we hope and pray for peace. And perhaps if we'll draw on the courage found in the raw honesty of Lamentations, we might find for ourselves, our families, and our communities, a new depth, texture and authenticity to our own relationship with God.

Again, that encouragement to pray – in a way that is saying what is genuinely on our hearts to God!

The second email was from Melissa Lipsett, CEO of Baptist World, relaying an update from BWA's Christian partners in Gaza. They report that levels of malnutrition are skyrocketing, and medical supplies at health facilities are almost entirely depleted. There is currently an agreed pause in military activity (though only in some areas of Gaza), and more trucks have been allowed in for the delivery of food and medicine, but it is only a fraction of what's needed. The region is in a hunger crisis as vulnerable people—many of them children—are starving.

As always, Melissa wrote, we cry out to our God of justice and mercy to intervene in this heartbreaking situation. Please join us in praying for:

- The rapid and safe delivery of food and medicine through humanitarian corridors, so families can eat.
- Those with malnutrition to receive medical care, especially children who are at higher risk of death.
- Lasting peace in the region so that all people may flourish and live in safety and security.
- Strength, endurance and protection for our partners as they serve in this high-risk environment.

These Christian agencies continue to work at delivering aid to children and families in need, and we are invited to also support their efforts by giving to Baptist World Aid's [Middle East Crisis Appeal](#).

***Grace and peace,***

**Belinda**